



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocate

New CASA training will begin October 3, 2018!

The Grand Traverse County **CASA** program is seeking interested volunteers to train to be a voice for children in Family Court. **CASA** is a national program that trains and supports court appointed advocates to act in the best interest of children who were abused or neglected. **Court Appointed Special Advocates** help ensure that these children are in a safe, permanent home, as soon as possible.

CASA training will take place Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:00 to 7:30 for 5 weeks.

If you or someone you know would like to become a **CASA**,
please call our office 922-4827 to schedule a pre-training interview.

Your involvement will make a direct impact on a child's life, perhaps for generations to come.



NAME CHANGE ~Our Program Manager, Jenn, has a new last name. She is officially Jennifer Moore!! Jenn got married in December and due to some complications had to wait to change her name. Well, that process is finally complete! Jenn's new email address is
jmoore@grandtraverse.org

NEW TRANSPORT VEHICLE JUST ARRIVED!

2019

Chevy Impala

A few details need to be taken care of and then it will be ready to roll!



NEW VISION ACADEMY

Summer 2018

New Vision Academy wrapped up in early August. We want to thank our wonderful interns, Rob Gray and Abby Barker, and amazing volunteer Darcy Schlitt for making this years academy a success! The students enjoyed and participated in multiple activities, speakers, and field trips throughout the summer. Below are some photos from field trips to Reining Liberty Ranch, F&M Park ~ Free To Play with Dr. Christina Richardson and Fabric Art with Kathy Calderwood. We had a total of 8 graduates who received a completion certificate and t-shirt. A big thank you again to all of our community facilitators as we could not have done it without them!



Learning Partners

Grand Traverse County
Probate & Family Court
Volunteer Services

Summer program opportunities for students and their families included a trip to a local horse farm Excalibur Stables to learn and ride, and a Sunday afternoon at the Dennos Museum "Monster Fish" exhibit.



Back-to-School means back-to-schedules, and Volunteers will soon be resuming regular in-school contacts. Our first monthly meeting is set for Tuesday, Sept. 11th, at 4:00 p.m. We have backpacks stuffed with supplies available for students, thanks to Rotary Club of Traverse Bay Sunrise!



September

John Evans
Pam Forton
Peggy Friess
Don Hutchinson
Ruth Jones
Patty Marrar
Karen Mauro-Doren
Alex Moore
Marilyn Vlach
Susan Wilgus

October

Jen Carlson
Jim Doman
Martha Falk
Linda Fawcett
Peg Gove
Dorothy Grow
Brenda Knaack
David Lloyd
Thad Shumway
Sue Soderberg



CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN
Grand Traverse County
MICHIGAN CASA, INC.

At our last CASA meeting we asked what topics would you like for future meetings? and some of the suggestion were:

Autism Training, Adult Drug Court, Reading Drug Test Results, Foster Parent Training—What's required etc., STEP—Students in Transition Empowerment Program—Homelessness, New Campus—Special Education, Family Reunification Program/ Family Support Program, Wraparound and Defecation Issues.

We will let you know which topic will be discussed at which meeting as soon as we get the presenters lined up. Please keep those ideas coming!

We have had a request to schedule, at least a couple, CASA meeting during the day for those that cannot make it to late afternoon/ evening meetings. We are working on coming up with a schedule that will work.

Stay tuned!



SAVE THE DATE

Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

2018 SUMMIT

Keynote Speaker: Brenda Jones-Harden Ph.D.

Invisible No More

OCTOBER 25-26, 2018

Grand Traverse Resort and Spa, Acme, MI

Child advocate named to state task force



Cedar resident Lisa Niergarth was recently chosen to sit on the Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect.
Special to the Record-Eagle

CEDAR — For Lisa Niergarth, a volunteer position as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), as well as a passion for helping children, has led to a seat on the Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect.

Niergarth, who is a Glen Lake school board trustee, was honored when she heard the news.

"There are people far more qualified than I, but I was very excited to be able to hopefully do something positive for the kids in our state," said Niergarth, 56.

Niergarth has been appointed to a two-year term that expires in December 2019.

An avid volunteer, Niergarth said her path to the post has been an unusual one that started when she and her husband Steve decided to adopt their first child, Nick, who is now 28. Two more children followed — Natalie, now 26, and Jake, who is 19.

Niergarth worked as a clinical pharmacist at Munson Medical Center and her children were all students at Glen Lake Schools when she realized she was not doing justice to her career or to being a parent. She was tired of missing their school events so she stopped working outside the home and became a full-time mom.

She began volunteering at school and later did some fundraising for the Great Lakes Children's Museum in Greilickville. Her volunteer activities earned her a reputation and she soon got a call from Bethany Christian Services, which had handled the adoptions of the couple's three children.

The organization needed a person for its Project Open Arms, which works to educate the community about the need for foster and adoptive families.

"At that time in the state of Michigan there were more than 3,000 children in the system waiting for adoptive homes," Niergarth said.

That work led her to pursue a position as a CASA, which has the role of advocating for children who've been removed from their homes.

"A CASA is there to really advocate for a child in foster care, whatever their needs are," she said. "We're a voice for the child."

As a CASA Niergarth meets one-on-one with the child and may meet with the child's teacher, caseworker and foster parent. She will observe the child interacting with a parent and will attend all court hearings, sometimes even testifying.

A CASA, she said, is the only person who is outside the system.

"Being outside I think we are able to see clearly some of the problems with the child," she said.

As a CASA, Niergarth often had cases in front of Grand Traverse probate and family Judge Melanie D. Stanton, who nominated her for the task force post. Stanton said she got a call that the board was looking for a CASA from a rural area who would be a good fit.

Stanton thought of Niergarth.

"She's smart, she's articulate, she knows the role of a CASA," Stanton said. "More importantly, she will not be intimidated in a large group by judges and lawyers and other people who will be around.

"I think she'll be an excellent advocate for children."

The forerunner to the current task force, the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice was formed in 1991 under former Gov. John Engler.

Niergarth is not the first Leelanau resident to serve on the task force. She joins the late Honorable Elizabeth "Betty" Weaver of Glen Arbor, a Michigan Supreme Court justice who once served as chair of the task force.

The task force is made up of 18 people, one of whom must be a CASA. Other members include judges and attorneys, health and mental health professionals, representatives from Child Protective Service agencies, parents, adults who were in the foster care system as children, and those who work with homeless children.

Dealing with children who've been taken away from parents can be very emotional, but Niergarth has learned to focus on just the child.

"You have to care for the kids," she said. "And if I care for the kids and I'm truly there to advocate for them, I will be able to fulfill my role."



**VOLUNTEERS IN
PREVENTION/PROBATION**

GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY PROBATE COURT

GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY PROBATE AND FAMILY COURT

MELANIE D. STANTON, PROBATE & FAMILY COURT JUDGE

280 Washington St., Suite B 150, Traverse City, MI 49684

231-922-4827

Or Current Resident

Learning Partners

1st Tuesday-4:00-5:00 pm

Tuesday September 11, 2018

Tuesday October 2, 2018



CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)

3rd Tuesday- 4:00-6:00 pm

Tuesday September 18, 2018

Tuesday October 16, 2018



***All meetings are held at the Volunteer Services office unless otherwise mentioned.**